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Gunshot Vandalism Results in Severe Power Line Damage

Information Leading to Vandals Worth Up to \$1,000

Bonneville Power Administration

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ALBANY, Ore. — Summer brings sunny days, vacations and unfortunately, more acts of vandalism. Bonneville Power Administration is asking for citizen assistance to help identify criminals who caused \$5,000 worth of gunshot damage to one of its power lines in Benton County on May 28.

The incident occurred at 1 a.m., about 14 miles from Albany, between the towns of Philomath and Wren. The damage resulted in a disruption of power to customers of Consumers Power. BPA crews quickly transferred power from another source until repairs could be completed.

“While we all enjoy the sunny weather, it unfortunately marks the beginning of vandalism season,” said Gail Dreckman, BPA security specialist. “We’re asking for everyone’s help to put an end to these dangerous and costly crimes.” **Anyone with further information concerning this incident or other vandalism to BPA property is encouraged to call BPA’s Crime Witness hotline, 1-800-437-2744. Information could be worth up to \$1,000.** Witness’ names are kept confidential.

Theft, vandalism and illegal dumping cost BPA around \$1 million each year. Gunshot vandalism alone costs \$400,000 to \$500,000. These costs inevitably trickle down to ratepayers. The \$5,000 repair cost of this latest incident does not include lost power sales revenue and economic losses to the customer.

More importantly, vandals shooting at insulators for fun should consider the dangerous consequences. Downed lines can cause fires and lethal ground voltages can kill or seriously injure the vandals themselves, as well as other people. Fire departments, police and hospitals are all dependent upon a reliable source of electricity to be able to respond to emergencies and to power life saving medical equipment. When vandals, thieves or illegal dumpers manage to put a line out of service, it’s not “harmless horseplay.”

In an effort to curb these infractions, BPA created the Crime Witness Program – an aggressive, large scale, neighborhood watch-style program. Again, anyone who sees or suspects a crime to the BPA transmission system, property or personnel is encouraged to report it by calling 1-800-437-2744. Cash rewards of up to \$1,000 are paid for information leading to the arrest and conviction of persons committing crimes against BPA. Names of witnesses and reward amounts are kept confidential.

“In the long-term, the Crime Witness Program should not only reduce vandalism, it should keep costs and rates down,” says Robert Windus, security manager at BPA. “In the last two years, some 200

incidents have been reported. Many of these have led to arrests. Others involving illegal dumping resulted in the mess being cleaned up at the dumpers' expense – not the ratepayers. Savings to ratepayers resulting from the program now exceed \$1 million.”

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